Mafia the Target

Bombings by 'FBI Agent'

Tucson, Ariz.

"An FBI agent named Dave."

"An FBI agent named Hale."

A Tucson FBI agent named David Hale.

—Three different persons? Or two? Or the same man?

Top FBI officials know, but are admitting nothing, in a tight-lipped investigation of sworn testimony that "Dave" arranged the bombing of Mafia kingpin Joseph (Joe Bananas) Bonnano's home, that "Hale" was involved in another bombing and that these two bombings — out of more than 20 anti-Mafia bombings here — were the after-hours work of a lone FBI agent bent on a personal crime cleanup campaign.

Last Mednesday in Washington, an FBI spokesman made the only official statement on the case: "The special agent alleged to have been involved is no longer employed by the FBI."

SUSPENSION

Further comment was declined and "Dave" was not identified. It was learned, however, that the FBI suspended "Dave" August 7 and that he resigned five days later.

That was Tuesday, August 12 — the same day that "an FBI agent named Dave" was first accused in open court as the instigator of the July, 1968, Bonanno bombing.

The phrase set off an alarm in FBI headquarters and triggered a recollection here of an earlier hearing, in which an FBI agent named "Hale" was linked to the September, 1968, bombing of a beauty shop.

Meanwhile, FBI agent David Hale — assigned to Tucson six years ago and known as a specialist in Mafia intrigues — refused to comment whether he might be the "Dave" or the "Hale" mentioned in the two hearings, held seven months apart.

COMMENT

Asked last Wednesday — following the FBI announcement from Washington — if he were still employed by the FBI, Hale said, "I would have no comment on that, either."

The FBI announced it is pursuing the case and cooperating with state officials.

Speculation, however, is inevitable in a city that, until the latest disclosures, had been nationally regarded as one of the hotter battlefronts in a Mafia war. It is thought in Tucson that the Mafia, crowded out of Nevada's gambling industry by billionaire Howard Hughes' Las Vegas purchase plan, is hoping to retrench in Arizona.

DOZEN

More than a dozen known or reputed Cosa Nostra figures have homes in Tucson. Among the most noted is Bonanno, once regarded as a possible successor to the late Vito Genovese, who headed the commission that acts nationally as the mob's "board of directors."

Bonanno's downfall began in 1964 when he was kidnaped in New York in what is believed to have been a battle for control of racket interests between Bonanno's family and another of the five Mafia "families" that operate there. But when Genovese died in prison last February, the 63-year-old Bonanno was in semi-retirement in Tucson, claiming to be suffering from a heart ailment that would keep him from testifying before a grand jury in New York

It was against this background that the Tucson bombings began. On July 21, 1968, a bomb exploded in a garage at the Grace ranch, owned by Peter Licavoli, a major Mafia figure from Detroit. The next night, two blasts shattered the patio wall of Bonanno's home.

CALL

These opening salvos in Tucson's "Mafia war" were followed by more than 20 other bombings at the homes or businesses of Bonanno associates. One took place in Sep-

tember at the Wig Beauty Salon, where the receptionist was Joyce Battaglia, former wife of imprisoned mobster Charles (Batts) Battaglia.

In January of this year Mrs. Battaglia testified, in a hearing on the bombing of the beauty salon, that before the bombing "a man who called and said his name was Hale with the FBI" warned her that she'd better quit her job or "he'd see to it that I did."

This aspect of her testimony passed with little apparent notice, but was recalled August 12 in a one-day Superior Court hearing for Paul Mills Stevens, 22, and William John Dunbar, 26, accused of bombing Bonanno's home.

Jane Hitchcock, 21, an acquaintance of Dungar, testified that both Stevens and Dunbar told her "an FBI agent named Dave" had put them up to the bombings because he wanted "the two heads of the Mafia to fight so there'd be only one head." The second Mafia head was not named.

SHARE

Though Tucson has had more than its share of gangland murders and disappearances over the last 20 years, the current bombings were out-of-key with reports that U. S. Mafia figures had recently achieved a truce.

Moreover, no one had ever been killed or even hurt in any of the bombings.

Among the angles law enforcement officials are investigating following last week's disclosures is a report that someone — perhaps the not-so-mysterious "Dave" and/or "Hale" — had contracted with young men to harass the Mafiosi with the bombings, in the hope of duping them into a suicidal internal war.

This loosely-knit, self-styled vigilante group, it is thought, is comprised of young men impatient with the slowness of the law and the uncertainty of stern punishment, ready to take the law into their own hands.

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